834 occasionally affects non-prostitutes also. Arab traders, particularly, like to joke with Coptic Amhara women when the latter come to their stores; such as teasingly to refuse to hand over goods after purchase has been made, or, if the customer finds the price on a desired item too high, suggesting that payment might be made "another way". These fixed stores, located near the daily or Saturday markets, feature luxuries rather than what are considered necessities; e.g. sandals, tea, sugar, raisins, necklaces, imported chocolate, etc. A woman deserted by her husband, or divorced, might succumb. On the other hand, Muslim women are much more segregated from menfolk, so that there is little opportunity for an Amhara male to break the rule with a Muslim female.

836 Virginity ("dengel") is expected of girls at first marriage, which occurs about the age of 14 or 15. If she is found by the husband not to be a virgin, and he feels sure of it and insists on his rights, he can divorce her, or go to court against her kinfolk claiming damages as high as Eth$200 - 300. This is rare, however, for at that age most girls are too young to have had much opportunity for complete sexual

584 intercourse. The courtship, apart from the above-described occasions during watch in the fields and on festives - when they are very formal -, consists of what adults condescendingly and smilingly refer to as "fidiarrat", love-whisperings, considered adolescent, during which the boy and girl alternate between childish whisperings and playful hitting at each other. The term is not used for love-making of adults or married couples.

587 Very different is the courtship of the girl after her first divorce, which frequently occurs when her personality matures, often while she is still in her twenties. She prefers an experienced lover.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

At around ten years the Amhara girl leaves the shepherd's work once and for all and spends all her time about the house. She becomes increasingly useful with kitchen work—chopping onions, grinding pepper, baking *Injera*. Bit by bit she learns all the arts of the housewife, including how to make good *doro wut*, a hot chicken stew, the dish that really proves the mettle of an Amhara bride. By the age of twelve or thirteen she knows enough to manage a home by herself and is ripe for marriage, though her training is often capped by a period after marriage during which she works alongside her mother-in-law in the home of her husband's parents. Thus the Amhara social system sees to it that the adolescent girl, as well as the adolescent boy, is familiar with adult work responsibilities and prepared to shoulder them without much ado.

Toward Marital Roles

The transition to adult status in Amhara culture is related above all to the assumption of marital roles. The three events which more than anything else establish one as an adult are marriage, moving into one's own house, and begetting a child.

Preparation for the roles of spouse and parent is more or less continuous throughout childhood, so that nearly all Amhara enter marriage as a matter of course and at an early age. Strong identifications are formed through virtually constant association with the parent of the same sex during adolescence, and to a large extent throughout childhood. When they are not out tending the herds, girls are working around the house in the company of their mothers, and boys are off in the fields or going on trips with their fathers. This identification is strengthened by experimental play within children's groups as well. It has been observed that tiny boys and girls play "marriage" and "house" with considerable sophistication, even to the point of pretending to send a messenger to the bride's parents to announce that she had been proven a virgin.[8]

With regard to premarital preparation for adult sexual functions, however, a double standard does exist. Although public norms require boys to be virgin at marriage, and one hears it said that "in the old days" this norm was strictly enforced, premarital sexual experimentation for boys is regarded as a natural occurrence.* In practice, and according to the norms of the male adolescents themselves, boys are expected to have sexual experience before marriage so long as it is carried out quietly and with discretion. If a boy is still virgin by the end of his teens he may be referred to by one of his

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*Indeed, one of the normal functions of maidservants in the well-to-do families has been to provide sexual initiation for adolescent boys.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

836 183 peers with the insulting term *ʾilb* ("castrated one"). Indeed, the word that comes closest to signifying male adolescent in Amharic, *goramsā*, has the primary connotation of one who goes around with women.

836 572 [837] The conditions attending premarital sexual experience for youths explain in part the nature of adolescent male peer relations. A *goramsā* needs at least one fairly close friend, not only as a confidant for his "secrets," but also to aid him in his affairs. When one *goramsā* goes to the home of a married woman—the strict controls against premarital affairs for girls limit his choice to married women or divorcees—the other stands guard to see that the husband or anyone else does not intrude. When he finds himself in rivalry with a competitor for the same woman, the friend assists him if the fighting gets difficult. On the other hand, the existence of a limited number of accessible females in any area implies that no alliance of friends can become very large; the competition is too great. The conflicts of interest among *goramsā* often provoke feuding and sometimes serious *dulā* fights.

836 [585] The unwed girl, by contrast, must remain a virgin at all costs. It is important to the groom, not only because of the religious and social sentiments involved, but also because the Amhara male cherishes the sense of "conquering" his woman. A girl who is found not to be a virgin on her wedding night will be beaten by her husband and possibly returned to her parents. Her parents will be scandalized, and, if she is sent back, will probably give her a beating.

882 In order to protect the girl's virginity, she is kept under close watch by her parents after the age of ten or eleven. They do not allow her to go outside the home area by herself or to associate with boys who are not her relatives. She attends festive celebrations in the company of her parents. In some families she is kept from doing excessively heavy work in order to prevent the accidental rupture of her hymen.

881 582 The onset of menstruation is kept secret, since menstruation is seen as a shameful event for the unmarried woman. But as the girl approaches the age of puberty her mother will be advised by other female relatives that it is time to be on the lookout for a husband. Twelve or thirteen is the customary marrying age for girls, as compared with the late teens or early twenties for boys; and it has not been uncommon for girls to marry still younger, especially in former times.

*883 [832] [584] This strict surveillance of the daughter does not wholly prevent a mild sort of flirting which occurs at the marketplace or on public holidays. On the latter occasions, especially Masqāl and Ṭimqat, the girl may make some effort to appear attractive. She may wear her best clothes, dress up her hair, and, if she can afford it, put on a bit of perfume. These occasions provide a chance for the unmarried boy to spot an interesting mate, in which case he

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

brides be virgin. Related norms greatly restrict their quest for romantic love. Since Ethiopian society still expects its maidens to be shy and retiring, and to avoid social relations with boys outside their families, the boys find few opportunities for getting to know members of the opposite sex. Even in those few situations where sociability between the sexes is publicly permitted, ingrained tendencies to segregate the sexes persist. The most liberal context for such sociability, the University College campus, has witnessed relatively little interaction between male and female students. In spite of their occasional resolutions to act more boldly, the college boys have in the past tended to shy away from the co-eds except during such rare formal events as a college dance or off-campus parties.

This is not to say that modern adolescent males have no opportunity for premarital sexuality. On the contrary, their opportunities in this regard are perhaps better than ever. The proliferation of brothels in Ethiopia's urban centers makes sexual initiation easy, almost a routine event.* Students also frequent these houses for social entertainment, dancing to swing and Latin rhythms, and sipping beer or soft drinks. Thus the continued sanctions against social intercourse in more respectable forms work to sharpen the Amhara dichotomy between decency and sexuality, and leave modern boys with a double standard that separates the marriageable girls from the enjoyable ones.

The idea that marriage should be founded on romantic love has brought greater anxiety as well as hope into the lives of Ethiopian adolescents. This anxiety is due in part to the above-mentioned inhibitions against that easy commerce of the sexes which so facilitates the discovery of a suitable love object. It also reflects a certain ambivalence toward the new ideal, based on a lingering attachment to the authority of the old system. This was manifest, for example, in the response to a college debate on the topic, "Resolved: that the custom of letting the parents choose a spouse for the children should be maintained," that took place in 1959. Although on anonymous questionnaires *90 per cent* of the college students said they will probably decide whom to marry themselves, and only 3 per cent said the decision would be made by parents or other relatives, in voting on the matter after the debate the students (in contrast to the judges who awarded the negative debaters) publicly declared themselves 42 per cent affirmative, 41 per cent negative, with 17 per cent abstaining.

Anxiety regarding the new conception of marriage, finally, is also connected with a new-fashioned fear of divorce. The mind of the modern adolescent vacillates between the ideal of an abiding marital relationship based on

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* Due perhaps to the greater importance of their peers, sexual accomplishments have now become a frequent topic of conversation and a matter for boasting among modern adolescent boys.